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**An Oral History of Judge John R. Hargrove
Conducted by Michael Louis**

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Interviewer: Michael Louis

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Abstract: Judge John R. Hargrove (1923-1997) was an associate judge for the Supreme Bench of Baltimore City. He also held various other judicial positions, including serving as an associate judge in the United States attorney's office. Judge Hargrove dedicated himself to numerous cases supporting the NAACP and the civil rights movement in Baltimore. In this oral history interview, Judge Hargrove delves into his work on some of these cases, his legal background, and the experiences of being a Black law student and lawyer. He discusses his association with the NAACP, primarily through Lillie May Carroll Jackson (1889-1975), the President of the NAACP at the time, and her daughter Juanita Jackson Mitchell (1913-1992), another influential civil rights leader. Judge Hargrove reflects on his memories of Lillie Jackson, her leadership style, and the impact she made. Finally, he shares his opinions on Governor Theodore McKeldin (1900-1974), a prominent political figure during the early civil rights movement.

Note on Oral History: Oral history is a methodology of gathering, preserving, and sharing the voices and memories of individuals and communities. As primary material, it documents personal reflections, commentary, and recollections, and is not intended to present a verified or "complete" history of events.

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Louis: [00:00:01] _____(??) get interviewing some other perspective. Can you say briefly what role you played in the civil rights movement in Baltimore?

Hargrove: [00:00:12] Well, I don't--it's really hard to say before that. I probably grew up somewhere in the--involved. I think my first involvement, not on any grand scale, came right after I was in law school the last go. After I got out of law school, that's when I probably got involved to some extent with Mrs. Jackson and the NAACP. But at that time, it was very closely associated with the Afro-American League they used to call _____(??). I think one of the earlier things that I got involved in was the '50--was the '54, maybe, maybe something. But I know that I worked with a couple of other lawyers, and we would just sort of battin around the school cases in the '50s. It was before '54, but it was right after I got out of law school. Bob Wiseman and Ms. Mitchell were there at that time, and I and a few others.

Hargrove: [00:01:28] We met, myself, quite a number of times, with Thurgood and Charlie Huston over in Washington. He was really the leading attorney in civil rights at that time, more so than Thurgood was. I think Charlie Houston was the forerunner, then Thurgood, and we met, I think many times dealing with trying to dig up the investigation on schools here. The number of square feet per school, what all they had in their segregated system, you know, statistical information for the possible suits, this was one of the events. It was one of the suits ____ (??)--one of the suits put together, but we sent word that the District of Columbia suits were the ones ____ (??) because they were a better suit. But we did the background information on that. So that's my early--but I was working at the time, so I didn't have an awful lot of time to devote to that, but I did give all the time I had.

Louis: [00:02:30] How were these cases brought to your attention? Did they--

Hargrove: [00:02:30] Well, Mrs. Mitchel, Ms. Jackson's daughter, and I were classmates in law school.

Louis: [00:02:36] Oh, really.

Hargrove: [00:02:37] We knew each other and it was some of her efforts that she fought with some of the younger lawyers together. We were both contemporaries, at least in the legal profession, because we graduated at the same law school class and had to take the bar exam together, Mrs. Mitchell and I. So she sort of called upon us with stuff and quest--request Ms. Jackson, who you would always see, I mean, she was always around with some project, some program, or something for the NAACP at that time. And she didn't miss anybody, she missed nobody, she came knocking on your door. And then I--we would offer for the--for Mr. Hughes, W.H.E Hughes, who was one of the leading attorneys in the country in the civil rights, he was one of the early ones ____ (??) bright man and that's the one. He did a tremendous amount of work for the NAACP

Louis: [00:03:37] In Baltimore?

Hargrove: [00:03:40] In Baltimore, and I was--we were a part of--I shared, I mean, office he did, I was in office in ____ (??), but it was through that we would come in contact with Ms. Jackson, she was always there, either at my desk or another. He could a little ____ (??) and maybe I did, but other than that, I mean, there were other lawyers involved, I mean, far more involved than I was, like ____ (??).

So--but the way I was involved is ___(??), it wasn't a question of not doing anything, but it was a question of some lawyers having more time to devote towards than others. But I was also involved very deeply in the hospital cases here, in the early hospital. The Henderson(??) Hospitals, for example, where they had totally segregated the facilities, separate laundry, separate lunchrooms, separate dressing rooms for the Black and white and grey. For example, the nurse's hall, each nurse had separate dining rooms. I think I did a project there for the NAACP for ___(??) relative to the cooperation of the Afro-American East Coast, but the NAACP was involved, which was a major project which was developed--I developed on my own, by myself, on my own time, in my own mind. But I know that's involved, but Mrs. Jackson was always there, I mean, she--you could always call up on her for some support. She would get out on the front, if you would do it, she would give out her support.

Louis: [00:05:24] So would you say that, in general, she was probably the most outstanding leader in Baltimore?

Hargrove: [00:05:33] Well, that's a lot. I would say that--you mean in the field of civil rights?

Louis: [00:05:36] Yes, the field of civil rights.

Hargrove: [00:05:40] Well, in this respect, I would say she was not because she was a very vocal, very aggressive lady and she wouldn't take no for an answer. And I wouldn't say she was feared by the political leaders ___(??) at that time, but they didn't buck her. I would also say that a man like Carl Murphy who was effective in his way. He wasn't out there running around like Ms. Mitchell, like picketing in front of the Ford Theatre for nine years. But he had the pen, he had the paper, and his paper writing was effective. And I think together they made a pretty good team. He was a tremendous man in the civil rights because he remembers the part the newspapers played back when--with whatever she did, I think she leaned on him, awful hard at times, for support. Particularly for media support because the white newspapers were not that interested in civil rights in those days. But she did--in her way she was--she will be the women's--she was out in front, she was the one who would stick her neck out, put it on the block. I would say, in that regard, she was.

Louis: [00:06:55] And essential and influential in getting the ___(??) I think, (unintelligible)

Hargrove: [00:07:02] No, she was not really.

Louis: [00:07:02] No?

Hargrove: [00:07:02] No, there were a lot--well, let's put it this way, _____(??) went to University of Maryland in 1935, ___(??) went to University of Maryland in 1936. I never knew that a lot of the University of Maryland's profile was Black. Bob Watts was in there just the year before I was, it had--Bill Murphy was in there before Bob Watts without a--Perkins was in there before Bob Watts. Yeah, well, we had about half a dozen that were there who were all Black. Bob was in a whole group of them ___(??) really all the Black students at university--in a sense that back in 1935, NAACP fought battles at the University of Maryland, and that opened the door, and I mean. Subsequently, all of us got in. I would say there was a better concentration to figure out if it was all Blacks because they (unintelligible) college. Well, Maryland, University of Maryland--University of Maryland Law School how ___(??) went to college, and you read about it, I believe. No, well, that's not really an accurate statement, that--I don't believe that. Not that there's anything that--She would have been there in '49 and I was there in 1950, there were ten of us, and I was with Ms. Mitchell in 1950 we--1947 and we

were there in 1946. It was a great many of them, they must've graduated with six or seven and I only graduated with four or five African Americans. Now, Bob was very active, probably more active than a lot of us, but it's sort of like, he went with a lot more cases with Ms. Jackson and Ms. Mitchell. But, well, I'm sure—I know he did, he was very active, a lot more active than some others, that I think.

Louis: [00:09:42] Now, when something that's slightly ___(??). In 1957, according to a report in the papers, there was six Black women selected as the leading role in the civil rights movement, and for here in Baltimore, Mrs. Mitchell was chosen.

Hargrove: [00:09:42] Not Mrs. Jackson?

Louis: [00:09:42] No, I was wondering, how well was she known nationally or consistently, better known?

Hargrove: [00:09:42] Yeah, what it--what it is, is Lillie May ___(??) born leader. As she was a younger woman, ___(??) have more sustained. Her mother--her mother was sort of the ___(??) lady and the one that took it over. By 1957, Mrs. Mitchell was at the lead and Mrs. Jackson was too old, she died--she was only seventy then--she was only seventy then. She died only a couple years ago and she was ___(??) (talking at the same time). But she had--so, what it is, at that time, Juanita was much more active. Although Mrs. Jackson was still there, Juanita was active nationally and her husband was a--had gotten involved nationally in the movement. But I think they would have to pick Mrs. Jackson sort of when you notice type of thing, you know. But Juanita--Mrs. Jackson never stopped; she slowed down for the last fifteen years. But by '57, Juanita was active nationally in the national NAACP and all that. So I can understand that she was the one fighting all of the ___(??), but her mother was still there.

Louis: [00:11:22] How much publish(??) did Ms. Jackson receive from the national press? Do you remember? I mean national--

Hargrove: [00:11:55] (talking at the same time) From the Black national press, you get a lot, but from the national press, not an awful lot. They wouldn't write that much--they would write, I think (unintelligible) we were getting a lot of press, but I don't think--locally they would give press when ___(??) or when they objected to something, but it was sort of a negative press, in a sense.

Louis: [00:11:57] I mean, for example, if you are dealing with a crisis, for example, would you find articles around Mrs. Jackson? (unintelligible) (talking at the same time)

Hargrove: [00:12:09] Oh yeah, she would be--there would often be something about Mrs. Jackson in the press because Baltimore was probably the most active, and she was at the helm of the organization. Everybody knows that, but it didn't do a thing. I think Baltimore took the lead as far as leadership, and I think that would be--that was Mrs. Jackson ___(??). She was a membership person. She would come out of her office and give memberships and wouldn't leave until she got it, but that was in her active days. And then, Juanita would do the same thing, Juanita would get membership, and they worked together on that for a long time. But no, Ms. Jackson would be in crisis in almost every issue, it was something or another, she was always involved. She was a tremendous lady in the civil rights movement.

Louis: [00:13:21] Let me ask you something about leadership. In leadership, you have those who talk about other leaders, while other leaders you can listen to, and those leaders who have a following. Where would you place Mrs. Jackson in that?

Hargrove: [00:14:23] I wouldn't say she was one to listen to because she screamed rather than talked. I think the establishment rather than community--the community would listen to her when she talked because she would go see the probably as much as any member. I'm not sure about--but the Black community always listened to her. But they went along with her most of the time but not always cause she would just talk. She was a talker and she would go on and on and on and on for hours talking to people until the affair. But she was--she would, you know, preach the same sermon, after awhile you get ___(??). But when she went to speak to the mayor or somebody else they listened, they listened to her. So, I guess, the ones who were supposed to listen to her did and she would bring them a message back or get them to accomplish. So she would--they listened to her concerns, they listened to her.

Louis: [00:14:26] Did she have a following in the Black community?

Hargrove: [00:14:39] She did have a following, no question about it. The NAACP was the largest organized Black group in the city. There were no political groups organized in the city then, no Black political organizations.

Louis: [00:14:39] What about CORE?

Hargrove: [00:14:42] Who?

Louis: [00:14:42] CORE.

Hargrove: [00:16:08] CORE wasn't even here, CORE was ___(??) CORE wasn't there until the 60s, see this was long before that, this was back in the 30s and 40s and 50s. Mrs. Mitchell and I were down there in '35 when they opened up the University of Maryland. CORE didn't get here until 1960, in the 60s, when all of the other groups started springing up. CORE wasn't around; it was nowhere to be seen. CORE never really caught on, yeah, there was a certain element in CORE, but it never really caught on. It cut off after a short while and disappeared like some of the others. The only two organizations around were the NAACP and the Afro. There were other organizations, but they were the only two that consistently stayed around and did something in the civil rights movement. I would say in Baltimore, the NAACP was better, but they were the only two organizations that the community really looked to as stable organizations. CORE and (unintelligible) came round and everybody knew there was unrest. There was a lot of talk about that type of stuff, but they disappeared, you know, in a couple years, they were gone.

Louis: [00:16:16] So the NAACP was mainly political in their area of resistance?

Hargrove: [00:17:48] There was nothing really political. ___(??) (talking at the same time) Civil rights was ___(??) I don't know. They would observe--they would never emboss a political candidate per se, but they would help people vote for Black candidates and I think it was because there was a lack. So, for example, they would say vote for a Black candidate instead of the white one. In a sense that was political but the primary purpose was to support the Black community, not necessarily--. They could care less, I mean, whether you were a Republican or Democrat, the politics of it didn't bother them that

much. If you were a Republican leader, it was fortunate, it was necessary to promote somebody as a Republican because of how that issue had been applied to political positions. They never took a stand on anybody, on any political family, to my knowledge, directly. They might have favored one over the other but I've never--they never endorsed a political candidate. I mean, they encouraged people to vote for Lyndon Johnson in recent years, but back in the day when it was Roosevelt or somebody they never really advocated for political positions. They couldn't because of the trial(?), the state trial prohibited them from coming ___(?) or else they would have lost their tax exempt status.

Louis: [00:17:58] Let me ask this personal question. I think it was in 1955 that you were appointed as an assistant attorney.

Hargrove: [00:18:00] United States attorney, yeah.

Louis: [00:18:11] So you are the first Black person to be appointed to that position in Baltimore. Do you think that the recognition of the NAACP had any influence?

Hargrove: [00:20:02] Oh yeah, I have no doubt about it. Again, it was a combination, I give them a lot of credit because they were the ones that came out and said you're gonna have to have people ___(?) in this position. But the background--you have to have someone--to do anything politically, you have to have someone with enough influence in the background to get the job done, and it was Carl Murphy, the president of the Afro-American, they knew he'd get along, in other words. The NAACP advocated the need, Carl Murphy did the, what you would call, the groundwork. He was the one who got the appointment, got the commitment from the then United States attorney ___(?). And then it became Judge ___(?) responsibility of--I would think at that time the NAACP wanted to find someone who they thought would do a well representative job because it was important to get people to the job, that's it. BUT if you're not qualified to do it that would set you back fifteen years. So this was Carl--so Carl Murphy was really the one who got the position. The NAACP ___(?) and they kept harping around, you know, Juanita Jackson and--around the United States attorney and Carl Murphy--they were the ones that put the ideas. This was their function, raise all the hell, so to speak. But you had to have the people in the background to get things done. Which the NAACP did not have that type of leadership, Mrs. Jackson could not go to the governor's office and say "this is who I want" because the governors and the mayors at that time did not want anybody (phone rings) who was obligated to the NAACP per se.

Louis: [00:20:03] Oh, I see.

Hargrove: [00:20:04] Because they didn't want her NAACP officials in there. They might have hired Black, but they weren't looking for Blacks. Sometimes--in some instances you're going to look for ones that are Republican controlled for the position. But I really wasn't anything like that because I was directly responsible through Mr. Carl Murphy because he and Juanita Mitchell and Ms. Mitchell and I agreed that I would probably do the job because I--as I told you, I did the hospital job by myself, which Carl Murphy was extremely impressed with, which broke up segregation in the hospital. I wrote a thirty--twenty-five to thirty page report which was published in four Baltimore newspapers and was sent to McKeldin by that time ___(?) it was such a silly thing that you should have to put your laundry in a different--you know, that kind of stuff. But we started, and they were impressed and thought maybe I was the one who had enough--

Louis: [00:21:08] Experience?

Hargrove: [00:23:03] Not necessarily experience, but a person who had enough "nigger" knowledge who would stick with that type of job. It was a very tedious, very difficult job, at least I thought it was. ___(??) everyday you find out it's a job like anything else. But that's how it came about. But I give credit to the NAACP--I certainly don't want to minimize their effort, but at that time they were playing ball and getting ___(??) not just medium in positions and would meet serious oppositions in this regard. and that's why I was the first one appointed to the United States attorney's office. I only just became deputy--after a couple years I became deputy at the United States attorney's office, I was second in command. But that was only because you've got to work hard at some point, you've got to demonstrate--you had to demonstrate that you could do the job as well or better than anybody else, that you were confident. In fact, the guy before me was my classmate at law school and actually he didn't finish law school as high as I finished in my law school class, so it wasn't even a contest. I liked him, you know, I think he's a great guy, but as far as students go, I was the better student and I imagine I fell as close to the top of the class as he did, I'm sure I did. But he was inducted before I was. So it wasn't a question of not being able to--course if given the opportunity you can do a lot of things and he wasn't able to do some of the things. However, Martha(??) Murphy and some of the young ladies there now ___(??) since 1955.

Louis: [00:23:04] Just two?

Hargrove: [00:23:04] Just three all together. That's not a whole lot of ___(??)

Louis: [00:23:12] No, it isn't.

Hargrove: [00:23:12] Plus, when I was over there, there were only six or seven of us and now they've got twenty-five or thirty ___(??) So there's been a lot of progress over there.

Louis: [00:23:22] And why is that?

Hargrove: [00:24:14] I think you do--I've been called many times by the states attorney office asking if I could help find Blacks who want to go there. But see, in the meantime, Blacks became prosperous. The Black man suddenly there was ___(??) a way to make a living, doors began to open. And this was a pivotal effort of the NAACP and the Afro. Black people start ___(??), start ___(??), start doing things, start making a living. So when we're asking somebody to go to a case we're going to take it down for 12,000 dollars a year, we always make it fifteen. You're not forgetting about it, and that's been the problem I think. Not so much about having ___(??) but the ___(??) Who would go there would have to give up their practice as opposed to states attorney's office, where you don't have to do that. So they would come over here and go to city solicitor's office and pay for that. Personally, I think they did all of that because I think that was part of the status of the group, but all those in the United States attorney's office go in two or three years come out a competent--a ___(??) competent lawyer. At the United States attorney's office you come out two years in, you come out better than you came in , you know, so that--you can't explain--you can't tell--you can't tell, I can't tell but I learned how to be an effective lawyer there. You know, I had been out of school five years, I learned how to practice law at the United States attorney's office.

Louis: [00:25:01] Coming back to Ms. Jackson again. What is it that you would say is the source of her power? Was it her family background, her personality, or because you would say, though, the--

Hargrove: [00:25:14] Her personality, without any question at all. Her family background wasn't that involved-- steeped in civil rights but her personality I think she, somewhere along the way she recognized that there was a need for someone to speak out. I think she would tell you herself that she was, you know, that she was hurt in some way, I think, when he couldn't go to school or somewhere along the way. And then she took up the--and she was an outspoken woman and wouldn't take no for an answer. She overshadowed the rest of the family, including the husband, you never heard of him. Keith Mitchell, her husband, was a very nice man, but no one ever heard of him all these years he was in the background you really never heard of him--about him. We all knew him, but nobody--he didn't come out in the forefront. He didn't try to compete with her for the spotlight, he stayed in the background. Her personality, she would not say no--she would not take no--she never stopped talking. She would talk and she'd talk, and she would embarrass you until ___(??) (talking at the same time) she got what she wanted. It was like a child worried to death about something and you tell 'em I'll give this to you just to get rid of ya. And that's--she was sick now--what she wanted was betterment for one thing or another, and she'd put her foot down and stay there. And wouldn't budge until she either got some kind of compromise out of you or some kind of agreement or understanding and that was it. And that was the secret to the NAACP cause she went around and collected, personally, the memberships. And she would go around and sit on doorsteps of people, five people, you get five memberships. If she didn't do that, anybody coming around wouldn't get five, they'd get one. But that's the way she was.

Louis: [00:27:09] Did she get both white and Black members? Or--

Hargrove: [00:27:11] Oh, she had--there were some white members.

Louis: [00:27:13] How did she deal with these people? Did she use a different tactic or was it--

Hargrove: [00:27:18] Well, there was (coughs) a group of whites who had been concerned about the plight of the Black, the--I think the Urban League, got the bulk of the white members because they might have been a little more moderate and they could--probably whites could put up with them in the League. But for Ms. Mitchell and for Mrs. Jackson, it was a lot of shouting, hollaring, you know, and had a lot of religious aspect to it too because they used Sharp St.(??) Church as a base. But there were some people who gave and she would go get the businessmen. She would make them get memberships. They'd give her membership, particularly all the Black--the white businesses in the Black community. She'd go to them to get a membership out of them and she'd tell them that "you're making a living off these Black people," and "why don't you support their causes?" And, you know, I think sometimes out of fear, a fear of retribution for Ms. Jackson, that she would talk about them if they didn't and her speeches (unintelligible). And, you know, people would--they were afraid that the people would suddenly abandon them, you know, so yeah, they would give. A lot of folks--a lot of whites gave in that way. That's how she got pretty much her membership from the whites. But she got them over here. They would not turn her down, all she'd do was ask. She'd go for different things, more than membership sometimes, she'd go for baskets of food and all that, and they would come up with it, they wouldn't turn her down.

Hargrove: [00:28:53] She was the civil rights person in the community--an activist, if you want to call her an activist. In those days, she was an activist. I'm not talking about what happened in the sixties, that type of activism. I'm talking about her day, she wasn't--she never threatened violence or anything come close to that, but I'm talking about she would talk and she would shout and she would be there

and she would take up the torch and picket and they would put people--and it started to get put in the papers. And this was the kind of woman she was. (talking at the same time) This was necessary, absolutely necessary, no question about it in those days, if it hadn't been done, we'd be ten years down right now.

Louis: [00:29:39] So about the idea about the idea of businesses, someone said that even before Martin Luther King had sort of popularized the idea of boycotts against white businesses in the south, Mrs. Jackson had carried a similar experiment. Is that correct?

Hargrove: [00:29:58] She was long before King, as I told you before, they picketed the Ford Theatre, which is a legitimate theatre in Baltimore City had a policy that the Blacks would have to sit up in the balcony. They were selling tickets at the office during the matinee and the balcony was the only place. The NAACP picketed the Ford Theater for nine years, nine straight years.

Louis: [00:30:28] Well, can I just ask the question for--regarding--. A lot has been said about Gwynn Oak Park. What was its importance for civil rights in this?

Hargrove: [00:30:39] I think it was just a matter of--it was just one other area of public accommodation and the Blacks were being deprived of--. There--it was the closest--probably the closest amusement park to the city. It's in the county but it's ___(??) (talking at the same time) avenue, which is not that far from the Black community. It was a cesspool(??). There were no other amusement parks around that I knew of that Blacks could even go to if you wanted to go. And I suppose the segment of the Black community who would like to ride ___(??) and all those other things have as much right to go there as anybody else in the community and that's the only reason I see it as important. Because personally I didn't know a lot of people who would go there, but there were a lot of people who would. Just like there were a lot of people who would go--a lot of people who wouldn't go see the plays at Ford because a lot of people don't understand or don't like legitimate theatre. But there were that group of Blacks who did, and they should not be deprived or placed--put in the least desirable areas to watch a play. Some people like to watch it down front, you got better eyes, you won't be up in the balcony looking straight down on the stage, horrible seat. But that's the only reason I think it was important, it was just one more step to the total community--opening up the entire community. Incidentally, in Maryland, the communities that opened up first were not in Baltimore City. Salisbury. I mean, eastern Maryland, public accommodations opened up long before.

Louis: [00:32:19] Than Baltimore City?

Hargrove: [00:32:21] For sure, I stayed in the ___(??) Inn in eastern Maryland when I couldn't stay in a hotel that was just down the street. I had been to ___(??) Inn, I in a--I was a government official, I was an assistant United States attorney. [00:32:33][11.7]

Louis: [00:32:33] And yet you couldn't stay there.

Hargrove: [00:32:35] They hadn't opened up. We couldn't even go in there to get dinner. The only place downtown that you could sit down in, when I first came down here was the post office building where I was located, that was 1955. Before I--and I've watched it grow up and down here since that time. And it's been 21 years, it has tremendous I think--.

Louis: [00:32:57] It has come a long way. [00:32:57][0.0]

Hargrove: [00:33:01] Quite a long ways. But, I mean, the only time that I could go into this hotel would be when some group had a party. And then, they didn't let that out completely, you couldn't go into the dressing rooms. And then they slowly opened up the ___(??) to take out and that type of thing, and open up the Read's. There was a big fight to open up the Read's Drug Store counter. The NAACP was at the forefront of that. And once we--once eastern Maryland opened up public accommodations, Salsbury, Maryland opened up public accommodations. These two, the other two, before Baltimore City, they had 'em all. Well, I didn't go there, there was a very enlightened lawyer who did a tremendous job over there, but that's just something of interest. I stayed over there before I stayed over here, and of course, Salsbury--I was eating at the restaurants in Salsbury, and I couldn't go in the restaurants here. With him.

Louis: [00:33:58] And some of the Morgan State students had a part to play in this in the 1960s. They were--

Hargrove: [00:34:04] Yeah, I was involved with that. Bob Watts, myself, and a number of others, we represented a lot of those students that all went to jail. And that they--they sat in in ___(??), it was up north where they socially sat in sit-ins up there. This was the popular type of thing in the day, if they sat in, they got arrested. We ___(??) on Bob Watts, he did a fine job on that--I think he did an excellent job. But when he called on a number of us to assist him, and I did and I think maybe two to three others assisted him. And I just left the United States attorney's office at that time.

Louis: [00:34:46] What can you tell me ___(??) (talking at the same time) Let's shift our focus slightly. What can you tell me about Governor Theodore McKeldin?

Hargrove: [00:34:57] I can't tell you any good things about him. I had a lot of--I had a couple of bad experiences with him. I think on the surface, if you had to assess him--assess him overall, I think he was a governor who moved--I think he was a flashy governor, really. He was a con artist.

Louis: [00:35:18] A con artist?

Hargrove: [00:35:25] A con artist, a first-class one. You have to give the devil his due, he did a lot of things. He was the kind of person who would come to Mrs. Jackson's church and make a beautiful speech and all that. But he was conning everybody. He'd tell you this and that, to keep you happy. ___(??) (feedback) He gave you just enough to make you happy. If you put the pressure on him and he gave you one little thing. If the pressure got applied again, he gave you something else. But he did it a lot of talk. He appointed the first Black judge, which was Judge Lane and Madison and all that. He opened the door of--no question about that. And I think he--but the time had arrived, it wasn't so much that he did it, it was that the time had arrived. The process was so strong at that time that I think any governor would have had to. And--but then, as a mayor--I have to say ___(??) was the mayor, I think. He was a very political governor, far more political than you would think. And people think--he was a governor who was like Roosevelt, although I think Roosevelt was a little better, but he was adequate. He was ___(??) he would go to the synagogue and he would have a Jewish prayer. He would go to the Baptist church and he'd have a Baptist prayer. He would go to the Catholic Church and he would have something. He was very clever in that way. So everybody--you know, everybody was happy. But other than--he had--he didn't have the best administrations. His administration, in my opinion, was one of the most corrupt administrations we had. I think he was the first governor, that I can recall, who sold judgeships, pretty much.

Louis: [00:37:25] He sold judgeships?

Hargrove: [00:37:27] I'm satisfied. He was the first one--let's put it this way, that he gave out--that he didn't exactly give them out on merit. I wouldn't know--I can't--he didn't give them out exactly on merit. He had a couple of people in there, and I think he started--before Governor McKeldin came to office, Governor Lane hired some real, high-quality people. But when he came into office, they became political. The first time he began to get a lot of political people on the bench, it was not good defense. And when he became mayor for the second time, he was no different. I mean, he was a man of his time. People--the Blacks at that time just wanted good words and good promises and token-type stuff, and that's what they got. Today, they would not be satisfied with him. They would be demanding more, of course, today Blacks have more control and more power than they did then. But he gave them just enough, he to go to the--he gave ____ (??) the Black political leader and he made them happy. Hopefully, he'd make everybody else happy. He'd got to Ms. Jackson, and she was a good friend. I'm not supposed--he never made her happy because she stayed with the pack. He would only satisfy about half a dozen people, and she hoped to satisfy the masses. People were not as frightful or concerned as they are today, you know, so he made them happy. A judge, a first time judge, the mayor ____ (??) was one out of a hundred and fifty in a state. Today, it wouldn't make them happy. We've got ten or eleven in the state now. See, I think he as far as being--he opened the door for a lot of things. He built a lot of first appointments, first Blacks. And I think he--by doing it initially he was--he became governor twice and mayor twice simply because the Blacks were grateful for what he did earlier. I'm not so sure he did all that much later on, but at least initially he opened the door.

Louis: [00:39:49] So there were political influences for civil--

Hargrove: [00:39:53] Oh, he was well paid for what he did. He was returned to office with strong Black endorsements each and every time.

Louis: [00:40:03] I--are you finished?

Hargrove: [00:40:04] Yes.

Louis: [00:40:05] I noticed he gave a speech once, it was in the 1950s, where he attacked segregation. But his claim was that segregation was bad for the country because he said it opened the door towards communism.

Hargrove: [00:40:20] Well, I don't doubt that he was a strong advocate of civil rights, but I think he preached more than he practiced. I think he would--he would make, like I said, he made a strong talk. When he said the right words when he was--he was glowing. But he did not really--he was powerless. He would not go to the commercial structure and say come on, let's bust it up. So he would do that because he was beholden to them to keep him in office and many other things. So--but then he would go and make a speech at the Chamber of Commerce, and he might condemn, you know, all the stuff, but he wasn't enthusiastic there or as he was at any church. Or at Baltimore College, he would give us--he would get coffee and call America commitment to build another building in--at Baltimore City College.

Louis: [00:41:20] But then he didn't do anything?

Hargrove: [00:41:22] Ah, not much in any amount ____ (??). You know, it's hard to place him. I don't know, out of all the governors, I think the governor that was probably more sincere ____ (??), I mean, regardless of race or, I mean, regardless of ____ (??), who did more, in my opinion, was Agnew, in his short two years, yes. I remember his appointments, genuine appointments. He put in ____ (??) except for Mandel, Mandel's been in there longer. But within his two years, he appointed about six dozen, within two years. I think his commitment to civil rights is part of that speech, and I was there. I think it wasn't his best speech--I think it wasn't a speech he should have made. But I didn't hear all of the speech and I think it was just a speech that the Blacks did not want to hear at that time. Don't have to worry--

Louis: [00:42:26] Was the speech during your time as--.

Hargrove: [00:42:27] Yes, I was there, I think if he had made--if he had said the same thing first, instead of saying it last, I would be thinking a lot more about it. I think there were some Black leaders who were involved in a lot of chicanery among the Blacks, but I'm not going to suggest that, he--that the way he did his governing was a great thing. I'm satisfied that he didn't invent the system, that he got involved and it wasn't invented by him, McKeldin was there long before he was with the same system and so it was taught. Yeah, I mean, he probably did as much in his two years. I just, I just think you have to give him credit for what he did. He had the first administrative system in Gil Ware, and Gilbert Ware was not a political figure. Gil Ware had a PhD from Princeton University who had a head on his shoulders and would not just say, yes ma'am, but was a consultant directly on many issues. He did a lot of things. But I'm not gonna--I'm not going to say that he was the greatest--

Louis: [00:43:41] Yeah, I understand.

Hargrove: [00:43:43] But he got involved in a lot of things.

Louis: [00:43:45] Let me just verify one thing about this man McKeldin. Um, his actions, do you think--would you say he was another political opportunist?

Hargrove: [00:43:55] He was a political opportunist.

Louis: [00:43:59] So there was a difference then between his public statements and his private beliefs? What do you really, really think?

Hargrove: [00:44:07] No, I'm not so sure there was a difference in his public statements than his beliefs. I think he probably believed that segregation itself was a--was not the best thing. But I'm not--but I think he never--he would never push it as far as he could have because I think he would push it only as far as it wouldn't hurt him, politically. In other words, he did as much as he could politically, though if it got to the point where it's going to hurt him politically, he didn't get to that area at that time.

Louis: [00:44:44] So he's not exactly what you would call a selfless man.

Hargrove: [00:44:47] No, he's not a selfless man. He spent a lot of terms in office. He rode our backs for a number of years, and we paid him off handsomely with votes for the few things he did. He gave us a lot of public works, organized a few buildings, you know, those things. And he went out there and dedicated them and made fluent speeches which, you know. And he was a bit--you see, the difference

between him and all the other governors was he was he was he was visible. He didn't stay out of the Black, he went into the Black and Jewish communities to make speeches. He was always in the community. And that's what--that's all it was, he was always there. When they wanted a speech, he came. When a couple other governors had called, they'd send somebody else, but he was there to endorse. Yeah, he was very good at making the speech himself because he knew that the Black and Jewish community was a good solid base, especially down in Baltimore City. Those two were all he needed. He didn't neglect anybody else either, He would go to the Polish and speak Polish in the Polish community, Greek in the Greek community, Hebrew in the Hebrew community, and dialect in the Black community. So, you know, I mean, this is the kind of guy--this is a political opportunist and I've heard him hundreds of times.

Louis: [00:46:07] Did he and Mrs. Jackson ever clash on any issues?

Hargrove: [00:46:08] Many times. Mrs. Jackson would clash with anybody. But no, she always forgave him, and he always forgave her. He would always come up with something that would soothe her somewhat. She was never satisfied--she was never a woman that you could buy off though. I'll give her ___(??), you didn't buy her off. You didn't--she didn't-- she had a goal. You might give her something along the way, but that's not enough. We'll take this now, but we'll be back for some more later, you know, that's the way she'd go. That was kind of her philosophy. She always said, "we're going to move ahead, we'll keep on moving ahead." But she was a great lady, don't get me wrong, that lady was tough. In her day, without her we'd be virtually at the mercy of the commu--and the Black leaders, to an extent, we had leeches. A guy you get who could control the group, he's the leader, but he's lined his own pockets, that's all we had in those days. Other than that organization, you had no integrity and no honesty in the civil rights movement. And an Urban League, of course, you know, I think they were certainly the same type of organization.

Louis: [00:47:18] The Urban League?

Hargrove: [00:47:19] Huh?

Louis: [00:47:20] Urban League was--?

Hargrove: [00:47:21] The Urban League was just a relevant--good, you know, it was an excellent organization. Furman Temple came up. Furman Temple was the leader at that time, you know, in the Urban League. And he was, in his own way, a very strong leader in civil rights too. His was in the job markets, and all--and, you know, getting jobs and that type of thing. Like getting electricians in unions and making sure that the Blacks got into these labor unions which were keeping them out. And the problem was with jobs--industrial. But in their own way, they did their jobs, and the NAACP did theirs, I don't know. I think I got two people out there waiting for me. I got to go over there so I--

Hargrove: [00:48:05] Ok, well then, is there any general statement or general comment you want to make?

Louis: [00:48:14] What about who? About Mrs. Jackson?

Louis: [00:48:17] Oh probably, just in conclusion, tell me something about Mrs. Jackson and Reverend Walter Carter, who I understand was a strong personality at the time.

Hargrove: [00:48:25] Who?

Louis: [00:48:25] Walter Carter. Did you know him?

Hargrove: [00:48:26] I knew Walter Carter. I didn't know him as well as I knew Mrs. Jackson. I knew him uh--I think he had a commitment. I think Walter had a real commitment. I think he was a very bright person. And I think he probably could have--without his strong commitment and involvement in civil rights, would have been--could have moved up position wise in his field to the top. He was a bright guy. But I don't think he was concerned about how he was going to go. I think he was concerned about what good he could do because I knew him and his family. And I'm sure he deprived his family of a lot of things to commit himself to the civil rights movement. And unfortunately, he died at a very early age. And I think today he would be sitting back and, you know, with a lot of things he worked on and done. But he was another young man who was a leader. And I thought for the little time I associated, I met him, I thought he was a sincere person. He was not, unlike some of the other leaders I met in these other organizations, he was not a guy who was selfish and looking out for himself. He was really an honest to goodness person who was out there on the firing line, whether it hurt him or his--he was a social worker, he did a lot of social work. And whether it hurt him and his family or not, it didn't make any difference to him, he had a commitment

Louis: [00:49:54] Well, thank you very much.

Hargrove: [00:00:00] Alright, okay, do I just give you this?

End of transcript